

14 TOP EXPERIENCES



Naadam Festival

1 Mongolians love their naadam (p222). With two or three days of serious wrestling action, awe-some horse racing and dazzling archery, who wouldn't? While 'naadam' literally means games, the celebration is much more than that. It's all about fun, getting together with friends and relatives, eating a lot of *khuushuur* (mutton pancakes) and emptying a vodka bottle or two. The most traditional festivals happen in small towns, where every member of the community is somehow involved. These village naadams are also super-photogenic – you'll snap more photos than you ever thought possible.



Staying in a Ger

2 Of all the experiences you are likely to have in Mongolia, the most memorable will be your visits to gers (p225). From the outside, gers look like simple tents, but step inside and you'll be surprised by the amount of furnishings and modern appliances a nomadic family can have. There are beds, tables, chairs, dressers, a stove and often a TV and radio. Visitors are always welcome inside a ger and you don't even need to knock (Mongolians never do). Instead, when approaching a ger, call out 'Nokhoi khor', which means 'Hold the dog'.



Horse Riding

3 Mongolians have been traversing their country on horseback for thousands of years. You should do the same. Short day rides are possible right around Ulaanbaatar (p53) – but the best areas are Gorkhi-Terelj National Park (p82) and Bogd Khan Uul Strictly Protected Area (p83). Multiday horse treks can be made at Khövsgöl Nuur (p129), Khan Khentii Strictly Protected Area (p88) and Naiman Nuur (p102). It can take some getting used to the half-wild Mongolian horses. Fortunately, local guides know their animals well – pay attention and follow their lead.